



Naturally Yours

The Natural Areas Program is sponsored by
Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife

FIRST VOLUNTEER STEWARD CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

More than 110 volunteer stewards of all ages and from all walks of life attended the first Natural Areas Volunteer Steward Conference held April 27-29 at the Strathcona Wilderness Centre.

In the beginning, our needs assessment indicated a maximum of 50 people would be interested in attending the conference. No one expected that more than double that number would register before the closing date, and unfortunately, we even had to turn people away.

Although the conference facilities were stretched to the limit and the weather only occasionally cooperated, the food was excellent, the company superb and

the sessions stimulated discussions and an exchange of ideas. There were 42 speakers involved in 21 different sessions that emphasized field identification, site management and working with people skills.

Many thought it would be impossible to pull off the conference successfully, given the large number of people and limited space. I have to admit at times I also had my doubts. But from the many positive comments we received, I believe we did it!

It would not have been possible without the help of a very dedicated planning committee and all the volunteer stewards

who make up this program. To all those people whose hard work and effort made this first Volunteer Steward Conference a big success, I extend my sincerest thank you!

The photos and comments included in this newsletter's special conference insert are a tribute to all of you because without your commitment, this conference would not have been possible.

Sandra Myers
Volunteer Steward Program Coordinator

ALBERTA WILDLIFE VIEWING GUIDE

Wildlife viewing is quickly becoming the fastest growing leisure activity in Alberta; whether bird watching, participating in wildlife photography or just walking through Alberta's Natural Areas to enjoy a wilderness and wildlife experience. Now there is a guide to make it easy for Albertans to experience Alberta's wildlife beauty firsthand.

The *Alberta Wildlife Viewing Guide* was introduced by the Honourable LeRoy Fjordbotten, Minister of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife at an appreciation reception on May 14, 1990.



The Honourable LeRoy Fjordbotten, Minister of Forestry, Lands & Wildlife with the *Alberta Wildlife Viewing Guide*

Members of the steering committee and participating agencies were on hand and sincerely thanked by the Minister for their involvement. "This book would not have been possible without the efforts, contributions and cooperation of so many individuals," said Mr. Fjordbotten. "Each contributor should feel very proud of their involvement in this project. I'm certain it will prove to be a very helpful guide that will be valued by many."

Peter Lee, Manager of

Viewing Guide (continued
on page 3)

CONSERVATION CONTRACTS TO REVEAL VITAL INFORMATION

Crouched among lakeshore grasses, wandering through thick boreal forests, examining rare plants in herbariums — these will be Alberta's finest natural scientists at work this summer in locations around the province.

The Natural Areas Program issues contracts annually for natural history research projects. This year, thanks to a substantial increase in budget, a larger number of contracts exceeding \$50,000 in total value will be completed to aid in the proper management of Alberta's wildlife, plant life and habitat while complementing the goals of existing programs such as the Prairie Conservation Plan. Additional support and funding is provided by concerned conservation groups including the World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Much of the field research for each project has already begun. Technical reports will be completed for most contracts in December of this year and will be made available to the public after departmental approval.

A Sneak Preview of Contracts

Leopard Frogs

The serious decline of the leopard frog demands that conservation efforts begin *today*. Once abundant and widespread throughout central and southern Alberta,

this frog's decline was so abrupt and took place over such a large area that study has been difficult. Redleg disease, overwintering mortalities and toxic substances are factors implicated in the population crash. Frogs are considered to be indicators of environmental health so there is reason to be concerned. The World Wildlife Fund has contracted consultants to research this threatened amphibian's status and provide as many details as possible about how and where it survives in Alberta.

Conservation Sites

In a jointly funded project with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, ten of the most important sites in this province needing protection will be determined. This spring, staff from the Natural Areas Program met with representatives of major Alberta conservation groups and noted naturalists and identified a preliminary list of sites, chosen primarily because they are important wildlife areas. During the next few months, a contractor may be chosen to inspect these locations, define boundaries and outline comprehensive conservation strategies.

Old Growth Forests

The preservation of old growth forests is one of the emerging major international environmental issues. Although old growth forests are identified as an issue in the federal government's Green Plan, there remains a great deal of confusion. What is the definition of boreal old growth forests? Do they exist in Alberta? Where are they? Natural Areas has issued a contract to complete the first North American study of boreal old growth forests which will begin to answer many of these questions for the first time.

Natural Area Biophysicals

Comprehensive biophysical inventories of Natural Areas are essential in building effective management plans for each site. Inventories for eight areas — Canmore

Flats, Fourth Creek, Ponton River, Mt. Livingstone, White Earth Valley, Clearwater River, Moose Mountain and Halfmoon Lake — will be completed this year with mapping of habitats, identification of significant features and species' lists.

Northern Peatlands

Dr. Dale Vitt, an internationally recognized professor of botany from the University of Alberta, will be contracted to identify 100 of Alberta's most significant peatlands in northern Alberta. During his field research, which will include a study of peatland landforms and vegetation species composition, he will help to categorize these peatlands in order of priority for protection.

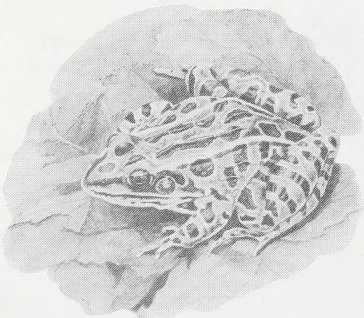
Parkland Ephemeral Wetlands

It is believed, for just a few short days each spring, ephemeral streams which flow in the parklands area may sustain some very rare plant species. However, the summer heat dries the wetlands, erasing all evidence. Wainwright is the site this summer for the first Canadian study of these ephemeral wetlands, a joint project with the World Wildlife Fund.

Livingstone Range

Previous researchers have explored sand dune habitats in southern Alberta and herbariums around the province in pursuit of Alberta's rarest plants. This year, the search takes place at Livingstone Range where it is hoped a discovery will be made of rare plant species of beard-tongue, fleabane, angelica, groundsel, Indian paint-brush or mustard plants.

If you would like to contribute to any of these studies, receive a copy of the complete listing of contracts to be completed this year or propose a research project to be undertaken in the future, please call Natural Areas Program staff.



Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*)

1st VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE A HUGE SUCCESS!

CONFERENCE COMMENTS

"I found the information presented to be enlightening and the stewards and staff very enthusiastic. Volunteers are a special breed of people and I am happy that I had a chance to meet and talk to these Natural Area Stewards."

Scott A. Miller
The Nature Trust of Alberta
Gwynne



Cake cutting kicks off conference.

"With so many environmental negatives to combat, being part of such a positive program is a real joy and the people - indeed the whole atmosphere - at this meeting have helped to enhance the solace and hope I derive from my Natural Area."

Dorothy Dickson
Red Deer River Naturalists
Innisfail Natural Area



Conference facilities were stretched to the limit.

"I feel that the conference was a great success. It has given me a much greater understanding of the wide range of things I can do in my areas. It's a great motivator as well!"

Wayne Hawker
Battle Lake South Natural Area
and Battle Creek Natural Area

"I got a lot of ideas and am renewed and inspired."

Maxine O'Riordan
Medicine Lodge Hills Natural Area

"I was very impressed with your first Volunteer Steward Conference at the beautiful Strathcona Wilderness Center."

Les Dunbar
J.J. Collett Natural Area

"I thought it was a very impressive conference and I was very pleased that the Public Lands Division treated the volunteers as important people or better still, coworkers."

Robert Kabatoff
Solomon Creek Natural Area



Door prizes and surprises galore!

VOLUNTEER STEWARD

A Recognition Banquet was held on Saturday evening of the conference. Kurt Gesell, MLA for Clover Bar, presented awards on behalf of the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife to four outstanding volunteer stewards.

Mike McNaughton was recognized for his strong commitment to conservation and the active role he has taken in a variety of projects. Serving as a steward for more than two years, Mike is currently responsible for the stewardship of three sites; Brazeau Tufa, Lousana and Delburne. He is an active member of the Red Deer River Naturalists and is also involved in a number of other conservation projects.

Mike was instrumental in urging the Alberta government to acquire a conservation easement on an interesting spring-fed wetland and associated forest in the Lacombe area. This was the first conservation easement negotiated by Natural and Protected Areas. Another project Mike has organized for three consecutive years, is the "rescue" of yellow

lady's slipper orchids endangered by highway widening.

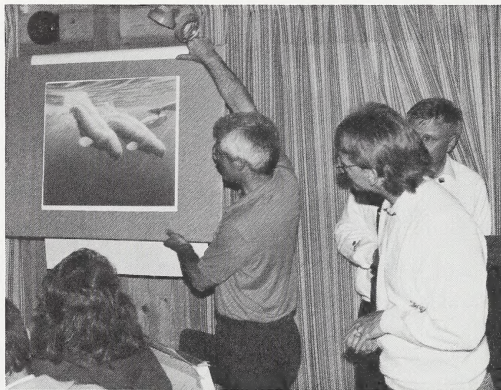
Mike Glossop is the volunteer steward for Wabamun South, Muskiki Lake and Grave Flats.

Mike, although absent, was recognized for his efforts in contacting local residents and neighbors of the Wabamun South site and garnering their support for the Natural Area. A great arm twister, he was also able to solicit friends to aid in removing old fences and installing fence posts and signs to control off-highway vehicles.

Both stewards were awarded a large

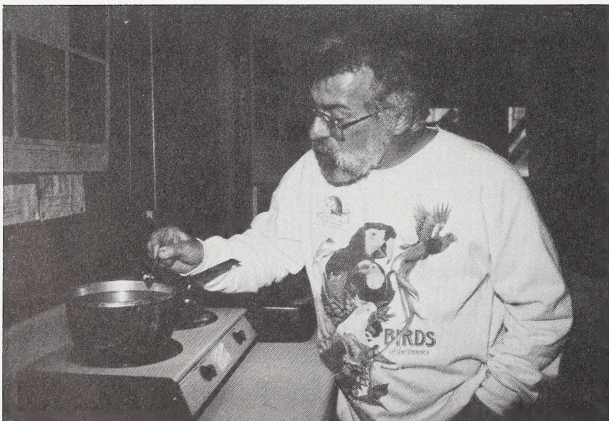


Dale Purkis and Rose Keiller, representing the County of Strathcona, accept award from MLA Kurt Gesell.

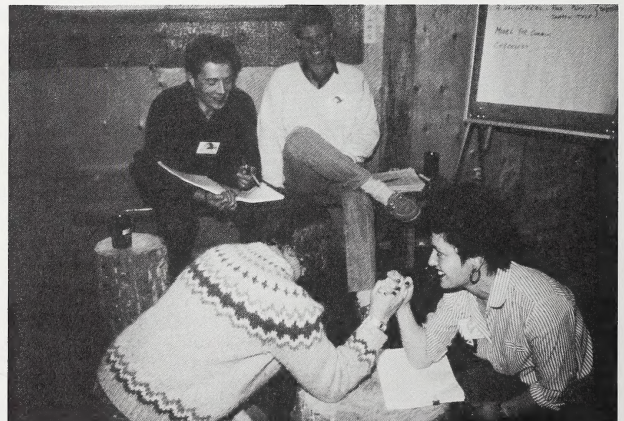


Peter Lee unveils the print awarded to Mike McNaughton (right).

SESSIONS AND



Boiling up bugs for mount preparation.



Finding the solution — conflict resolution.

RECOGNITION BANQUET

Michael Dumas print entitled "Rhythm of the Sea-Beluga Whales". The prints were donated by Giftcraft Limited in Edmonton.

The **County of Strathcona** was recognized for their involvement in the Sherwood Park Natural Area. The County coordinated and assisted with the construction of a parking lot, staging area and trail system and has played a lead role in drafting the Sherwood Park Natural Area Management Plan. The County chairs a volunteer management committee of



Two-year volunteer stewards were awarded T-shirts.

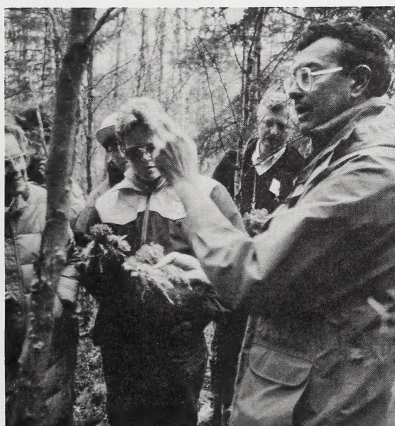


Wagner Natural Area Society members Terry Thormin, Alice Hendry, Patsy Cotterill, Barry Jenkins (front row); Kurt Gesell, MLA for Clover Bar (left side back row).

seven individuals who are now implementing the plan. Councillor Dale Purkis and Rose Keiller, a representative of the committee, accepted an Isabel Levesque print and "First of Province" Alberta Bird Game Conservation Stamp, donated by Ducks Unlimited Canada.

The members of the **Wagner Natural Area Society** were recognized for eight years of involvement in the Wagner Natural Area. The volunteers were acknowledged for their dedication and hard work in ensuring the protection of this very valuable site. The Fish and Wildlife Division donated eight copies of the newly released "Alberta Wildlife Viewing Guide" which were presented to the Society.

FIELD TRIPS



Moss identification field trip.



Enjoying the simple pleasures of nature.

BEHIND THE SCENES



The caterers created outstanding meals.



Volunteers washed dishes and washed dishes and . . .



A crowded lunch break.



Chel's beautiful music enhanced the atmosphere.

Leaf and Tendril

by John Burroughs

I am bound to praise the simple life, because I have lived it and found it good. When I depart from it, evil results follow. I love a small house, plain clothes, simple living. Many persons know the luxury of a skin bath — a plunge in the pool or the wave unhampered by clothing. That is the simple life — direct and immediate contact with things, life with the false wrappings torn away — the fine house, the fine equipage, the expensive habits, all cut off. How free one feels, how good the elements taste, how close one gets to them, how they fit one's body and one's soul! To see the fire that warms you, or better yet, to see the spring where the water bubbles up that slakes your thirst, and to dip your pail into it; to see the beams that are the stay of your four walls, and the timbers that uphold the roof that shelters you; to be in direct and personal contact with the sources of your material life; to want no extras, no shields, to find the universal elements enough; to find the air and the water exhilarating; to be refreshed by a morning walk or an evening saunter; to find a quest of wild berries more satisfying than a gift of tropic fruit; to be thrilled by the stars at night; to be elated over a bird's nest, or over a wild flower in spring — these are some of the rewards of the simple life.

Editor's Note: At the Saturday evening banquet Rita Talaber, volunteer steward of Mt. Livingstone, read this conservation quote by John Burroughs from the book *The Earth Speaks*. I feel this captures the overall feeling shared at the conference and enjoyed year-round in Alberta's Natural Areas.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Alberta's outdoors became the classroom and the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, the conservation teacher for 150 students at North Cooking Lake Natural Area on Friday, May 4, 1990.

As a part of Education Week, students from Lorne Akins Junior High School in St. Albert helped replant a portion of this Natural Area with the planting of 500 white spruce seedlings.

While half the class toiled with pick axe and shovel in preparation for planting the trees, their classmates were taken on an educational walk through the Natural Area. These students saw the various plant species and successional stages of many plant communities. They witnessed evidence of wildlife and were given an

overview of the site's natural history.

Prior to this field trip, students attended a special school presentation on Natural Areas and forestry given by representatives of the Public Lands and Alberta Forest Service Divisions. In addition to learning the definition of Natural Areas, students were given a short history of the program and insight into the importance of these protected parcels of land. As well, a brief overview of forest management principles highlighted the many uses of this resource, and details on reforestation and the subsequent field trip were covered.

All in all, it was a great field trip. Everyone was able to soak up the sunshine (many of the kids' shoes soaked up

slough water) and learn a bit more about Alberta's outdoors. At the same time, all participants made a valuable contribution to the future of this site, through the planting of the white spruce seedlings.

Viewing Guide (continued from page 1)

Natural and Protected Areas, gave an enlightening and humorous slide presentation which visually emphasized why wildlife viewing and wilderness interest are becoming so popular.

Several volunteer stewards and staff of the Public Lands Division were involved in the development of the guide to ensure complete and accurate content. Some were acknowledged in the *Alberta Wildlife Viewing Guide* for their contributions to viewing site documentation, review of draft contents of the guide and other forms of support. Those recognized were Ron Bjorge, Jim Lange, Chel Macdonald, Carol Smith, Terry Thormin, Peter Lee, Bill Richards, Dave Ealey and John Rintoul. As well, the project was truly a joint venture with several government and private organizations involved. These included the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation; Alberta Tourism; Alberta Recreation and Parks; Parks Canada; Federation of Alberta Naturalists; and Lone Pine Publishing.

The 95-page guide highlights 60 sites (including six Natural Areas and three Candidate Natural Areas) and contains: color photographs and illustrations of Alberta's mammals, birds, amphibians, fish, reptiles, trees, shrubs and flowers; tips on

successful wildlife viewing and photography; a list of the 50 most sought-after wildlife species and where to find them; and colour access and site maps. The paperback version is available for \$7.95 at all chain and most independent bookstores, and at camera and outdoor recreation stores throughout the province.

The allure of wildlife viewing prompted the Fish and Wildlife Division to initiate the Watchable Wildlife Program in 1988. The program is specifically designed to assist more and more Albertans to become involved in this pastime. The guide is a wonderful information piece which will promote Alberta's Natural Areas to Albertans and visitors.

With Alberta's some 442 species of animals and birds, over 2,000 species of plants and designation of new Natural Areas, wildlife viewing will continue to pique the interest of Albertans. It is hoped that with greater interest, an increase in public awareness and support for wildlife conservation efforts will also be realized.

Existing or Candidate Natural Areas covered in this guide are:

<i>Wagner</i>	<i>Red Rock Coulee</i>
<i>Beaverhill</i>	<i>Kleskun Hill</i>
<i>Outpost Wetlands</i>	<i>East Porcupine Hills</i>
<i>Beehive</i>	<i>Island Lake/Crows-</i>
<i>Big Sagebrush</i>	<i>nest Pass</i>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Field Trips

July 15 Bow Valley Provincial Park

A one-day field trip to Bow Valley South to look at unique montane, boreal and prairie elements of vegetation. Co-sponsored by Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC) and the Botany Study Group of the Calgary Field-Nats. Call Jim Posey (296-2409/243-1921) for more information.

July 28-29 Cardinal Divide

Sponsored by ANPC. Contact Lorna Allen (436-8032/427-5209) in Edmonton.

July 29 Highwood Pass

A one-day field trip to explore an alpine cirque valley above the tree line. Co-sponsored by ANPC and the Botany Study Group of the Calgary Field-Nats. Call Jim Posey (296-2409/243-1921) for more information.

September 8 Clyde Pitcher Plants

Sponsored by ANPC. Contact Matt Fairbairns (437-0177) or Derek Johnson (436-8231) in Edmonton.

Courses

August 13 Native Trees of Alberta

A 2 1/2 hour course, plus field trip to discuss and identify native trees. August 13 (7:00 - 9:30 p.m.) August 18 (all day field trip). Cost is \$40.00. Call Calgary Parks and Recreation (244-6661/244-6562) to register.

REDWATER CLEAN-UP

Members of the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (A.O.H.V.A.) who are Volunteer Stewards of the Redwater Natural Area, held their third annual clean-up campaign on April 29, 1990.

In spite of the cold and windy weather, about 24 volunteers participated in the event. The majority of the material collected was metal and glass that had been dumped there by area residents and businesses many years ago. Pieces of everything from farm machinery, furniture, oil and canned food containers, to bottles, stoves and bicycles, filled five trucks. Some of it was retrieved only with great difficulty, because access by trucks was made impossible by the trees and bush that had grown up around the sites. (One such pile yielded a 1951 farm truck license plate).

Current users of the area have not left much behind. The "Use With Respect" signs supplied and installed by the A.O.H.V.A. seem to have had a favorable impact. One notable and most disturbing exception is the shooting of hundreds of beer bottles. This mindless practice has

resulted in thousands of particles of broken glass, which will never rust or rot away, and are very difficult to retrieve!

One garbage pile and a major dumping site were discovered. These are still to be cleaned up, but are too big to be tackled by a volunteer effort. The Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife will try to find the funds to have it done.

The aim of the A.O.H.V.A. is to educate the different user groups to use the land in ways that minimize damage. The practices of driving off-highway vehicles on existing trails and taking all garbage with you are encouraged. We are also working with Forestry, Lands and Wildlife department planners to designate the north-eastern part of the Natural Area off-limits to motorized vehicles.

Submitted by Rudi Zacsko
Volunteer Steward
A.O.H.V.A. President



Editor's Note:

The Redwater Natural Area is a 2200 ha site approximately 20 km northeast of Edmonton. The A.O.H.V.A. has been the steward for two years and has done a tremendous job in cleaning up the site and educating users about responsible use. Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife does have a limited budget for areas requiring major clean-ups. A contract will be issued this year to clean-up the major dump at Redwater that Rudi mentions in his article.

WAGNER NATURAL AREA UPDATE

The consulting group hired by Alberta Transportation and Utilities to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the proposed interchange connector road in the vicinity of Wagner Natural Area has completed their final report. The report from Richard Spencer and Associates concluded that "even with technical and other mitigation measures, serious impacts to rare and significant plant species will occur if the road is constructed in its present alignment." The consultants stated that "we must conclude that the proposed alignment is unacceptable and that the connector road should not be constructed where currently proposed."

The report also contains additional recommendations for mitigation, monitoring and further studies. At time of the newsletter printing a public open house/meeting to solicit submissions from the public on the final report/recommendations, was to be held at Winterburn Hall on June 28, 1990. The report and public submissions will be forwarded to the government for a final decision on the proposed development.



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